

Log R-615B



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: May 31, 1989

In reply refer to: R-89-36

Each Amtrak Host Railroad
(See attached list)

About 3:15 p.m. mountain daylight time on August 5, 1988, westbound National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) train 7, The Empire Builder, derailed near Saco, Montana, while operating on the Burlington Northern (BN) Railroad. Five passengers and 1 Amtrak service crewmember received serious injuries; 87 passengers and 13 Amtrak service crewmembers received minor injuries. The estimated damage was \$2,778,000.¹

Although operational testing was not a causal factor in this accident, the Safety Board has long been an advocate of effective operational testing as a means of promoting safe train operations. The information gained is of primary importance for quality assurance in monitoring rules compliance and routine performance for safety enhancement purposes. The Board understands that in order to be objective this type of testing must be surreptitiously performed, which, in many instances, is time consuming. It appears that information on operational testing of Amtrak employees could be easily obtained from Amtrak's host railroads. The Board believes that Amtrak should implement a program with each of its host railroads to periodically obtain information the host railroad has compiled on Amtrak employees and that this information should be sent to the tested employees' immediate supervisors.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that each Amtrak host railroad:

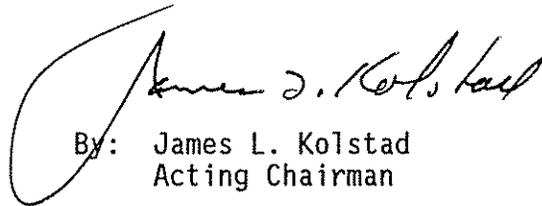
¹For more detailed information, read Railroad Accident Report-- "Derailment of National Railroad Passenger Corporation Train 7 on Burlington Northern Railroad Near Saco, Montana, August 5, 1988" (NTSB/RAR-89/03).

Cooperate with Amtrak in developing a program to inform Amtrak of the results of operating tests performed by your railroad on Amtrak employees. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-89-36)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations R-89-31 through -33 to the Burlington Northern Railroad Company and R-89-34 and -35 to the National Railroad Passenger Company.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety R-89-36 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, and BURNETT, LAUBER, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: James L. Kolstad
Acting Chairman

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